I stuff the paper in my pocket without saying a word (this was three days ago); but this evening, feeling in good form, I go upstairs to the *Revue* and ask to speak with Alexandrc Natanson.

After an exchange of civilities and smiles:

"I was presented the other day/' I said, "with this little statement of debt, which I arn quite willing to settle, but which I am unable to understand/' And I hold out the little scrap of paper, (I had learned my sentence by heart.)

There follows a silly discussion about the copies of *Gandaulc,* which I was by chance about to pay for a second time. That question clarified, I resume:

"My second amazement concerns the *Mille el line Nutts.* I never thought for a minute that either you or Mardrus would make me a gift of the edition on special paper; but I am surprised to pay more for it here than I would at an ordinary bookshop. Is this because I am *one of your authors/ as you say?"

Natanson immediately explains that there is a mistake, that of course the discount will be made, and that I did right to complain.

"You understand/' he said, "the accounts are merely approximate, very approximate. Impossible to keep track of individual considerations. So, systematically, the top price is entered everywhere. The accounts are very coarsely made up, you understand. Naturally I can't stick my nose into everything; so each individual has only to lodge a protest. Take for example Mirbcau —you certainly know how definitely he is one of our authors, Mirbeaul Well, he happened to be in exactly the same situation. Since he gets all his books from us, he received a bill the other day for fifteen hundred francs. He protested, Do you know how much his bill was reduced? . , . To nine hundred francs. All you have to do is protest, you see/*

"That's all right,* I reply, "for those who have Mirbeau's tempera-

ment—or mine" (and I emphasize this as best I can); "but there are some who, without suspecting anything, would be capable of paying the full sum/'

"Perfect!" says Alexandra. Then, catching himself, he adds: "You understand, if they don't want to pay so much, let them go to their bookshop. Here we don't get the commission* * . . Do you know how many charge accounts we keep?"

**?*

'Twelve thousandl , . /* (I think this is the figure he said.) "Now are you satisfied?"

"No. I should still like you to give instructions to your cashier/'

"All right/* says Alexandre; "come with me/'

We follow the little corridor outside the editorial office. Alexandre opens the second door on the left, This is the business office. At an enor-